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SUBJECT: ITALIAN UNECE CANDIDATE BELIEVES SYG BAN MAY ACT QUICKLY ON
EXEC SEC POST

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

¶1. (U) Paolo Garonna, Deputy Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), met with Charge October 31 to seek USG support for his bid to be appointed by UN SYG Ban Ki-Moon as the UNECE Executive Secretary. Marek Belka is departing as ExecSec to work as an IMF Director in DC.

¶2. (U) Garonna listed three major points favoring his candidacy. First, he noted his American ties, having studied as a Fullbright scholar in Denver. Second, he painted himself as a reformer, having eliminated some unneeded programs at UNECE that duplicated macroeconomic analysis being performed at the IMF. Third, he noted his experience at UNECE has developed his technical competence and strengthened his dedication to a pan-European approach.

¶3. (SBU) Garonna noted that the USG had announced it supported his candidacy last time the position was open, but unfortunately he got that message only hours before hearing that Belka had gotten the job. While he appreciated very much the USG support, he indicated it would be better this time if the USG could decide who to support before the decision is made. He added that Belka had told him that SYG Ban had said he intended to make his decision quickly - 'within the month' - which might mean October or November.

¶4. (SBU) Garonna added that the process has been somewhat opaque, as he has only heard indirectly who might be the other candidates: the Bulgarian current Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister; the Romanian Foreign Minister; maybe the Macedonian former Foreign Minister and outgoing UNGA President (even though he was recently named by UNSYG as the special envoy for climate change); and a Polish professor. He had not seen the press reports about a Slovakian candidate, and knew of no other candidates. On the other hand, Belka's appointment last time also had come out of the blue, as not even the Polish Ambassador in Geneva appeared to have known about it beforehand (and had thrown a dinner to support Garonna's candidacy).

¶5. (SBU) The Charge said that the U.S. would like to see leadership at the UNECE that would: continue and consolidate reform; help stabilize and further integrate countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia; and further strengthen trans-Atlantic ties. He pledged to relay to Washington and USUN New York Garonn's points, including his view that a decision might be made by the SYG soon.
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